

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2005

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members: Chatterjee, Kirk, Kreider, Raser, Senhauser, Spraul-Schmidt, and Sullebarger present. Absent: Bloomfield and Wallace.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of the Monday, October 24, 2005 (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Sullebarger).

APPEALS TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Urban Conservator William Forwood reported that the Zoning Board of Appeals had that morning heard an appeal by several residents of Northside to the Director of Buildings & Inspection's interpretation that the size and mixture of uses within the proposed Walgreens store at Hamilton and Blue Rock Avenues is consistent with the zoning code. The appeal of Director Langevin's decision was defeated on a tie vote, so his ruling stands.

This decision makes it likely that Anchor Properties will now appeal the Historic Conservation Board's denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the associated parking lot within the historic district

Mr. Forwood also reported that the owner of 3003 Fairfield Avenue has requested a postponement of his appeal of the HCB's denial of a COA for glass block infill, pending its on-going discussion regarding such works. Mr. Forwood said that he has discussed this matter with Mr. Wolfe and that he may return to the Board with a modified proposal before pursuing the appeal to the ZBA.

REPORT ON GLASS BLOCK INFILL FOR BASEMENT WINDOWS, EAST WALNUT HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT

Mr. Forwood presented a report on the way other cities address the issue of glass block infill of window openings. He indicated of the forty other ordinances reviewed, only one (Grand Rapids, MI) specifically addressed the treatment in detail. This ordinance seems to have been the model for a similar draft version for Detroit, MI. Regionally, only Newport, KY mentions glass block by limiting it to the basements of facades not visible from the street.

Mr. Forwood indicated that staff was unable to identify any other major city that provided guidance on glass block infill, but universally, the window guidelines called for repair or replacement in-kind to match the historic window. Recommended security measures include electronic surveillance or interior solutions; some (but not all) cities allow metal grates, though some guidelines prohibit such treatment on street facades. Mr. Forwood reminded the Board that although the issue of glass block arose from conditions in the east Walnut Hills Historic District, the treatment is one that has been proposed or installed without a COA on numerous occasions in other historic districts

Ms. Sullebarger questioned whether the East Walnut Hills Assembly had been notified of this meeting. She felt that since that neighborhood had strong opinions concerning glass block, she was hesitant to discuss the issue without knowing their views. Mr. Kreider pointed out that if the Board's approach was to examine its policy internally, there was no need for community input at

this time. If the Board decides to reopen the guidelines, then he agreed that public notification would be required. He indicated that the reason he felt glass block needed to be discussed by the Board was that glass block is being installed without COAs.

Mr. Kirk felt there were legitimate arguments for using glass block especially since the guidelines did not specifically prohibit it. He made a distinction between a window replacement and an infill and questioned which guideline should address the problem. Staff concurred that for building permit purposes, glass block is considered infill and is not exempted as a window replacement.

Mr. Senhauser pointed out that glass block is really a light-transparent wall and was never intended to be a window. It is not in keeping with the nature of an historic property, regardless of how many owners have installed glass block for safety reasons. He said there are alternative measures that are historically appropriate, meet the guidelines, and sees no need to modify the present guidelines.

Mr. Kreider pointed out that the purpose of this discussion is to determine if there are allowable circumstances for glass block. He acknowledged that many people in the districts are either not aware of the historic guidelines or ignore them. He also agreed with Mr. Kirk that the public should be educated on the building code/safety issue as well as historic.

Mr. Raser concurred that the staff should develop guidance regarding glass block and alternate preferred security measures that could be disseminated to property owners in the historic districts. He also feels that the document should be positively worded to encourage owners to comply with the guidelines.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted (motion by Kreider, second Raser) to take the followings actions:

1. Direct staff to draft for further consideration a document for promotional and educational purposes within the historic districts addressing the issue of glass block and other security measures.
2. Table consideration of the modification of the East Walnut Hills Historic District guidelines.

ADJOURN

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser, Chairman

Date: _____